

Jeremy Herb, *Star Tribune*

Aides say security for state's congressional delegation could be increased as a result of the shooting in Arizona.

WASHINGTON - The shooting of U.S. Rep. Gabrielle Giffords hit home for members of the Minnesota congressional delegation: They host the same sorts of events as the one outside a grocery store in Tucson, Ariz., where Saturday's shooting occurred.

As Minnesota members reacted to Saturday's shooting with shock and sadness, congressional aides said the attack could lead to changes over how members of Congress handle security.

"The fear is that members of Congress are also regular citizens," said Bill Harper, chief of staff to Rep. Betty McCollum. "They live in neighborhoods, they have families, they go to grocery store. They're exposed all the time."

Rank-and-file members of Congress don't receive special security. They frequently hold public events to meet constituents, and at most they don't receive any extra security from local law enforcement.

"Congresswoman Giffords was doing what so many public servants do every day, meeting with her constituents, listening to the people who sent her to Washington," Sen. Amy Klobuchar said in a statement.

Rep. Michele Bachmann issued a statement saying, "My tears are flowing, and I am stunned and angered that Gabby Giffords was savagely gunned down while performing her congressional duties. I am praying for Gabby. ... It is my hope and expectation that the coward who carried out this horrific act will be prosecuted to the full extent of the law."

In interviews Saturday afternoon, Minnesota congressional aides said that they don't feel fearful in public with members.

However, there have been several recent incidents where threats were made against Minnesota elected officials.

In October 2008, the homes of six lawmakers, both Democrats and Republicans, were vandalized with spray paint. On then-U. S. Sen. Norm Coleman's garage, the vandals wrote: "U R A CRIMINAL RESIGN OR ELSE!"

After the federal health care law was passed last March, McCollum, Klobuchar, Rep. Keith Ellison and Sen. Al Franken were all sent threatening letters.

Ellison also received a voice mail saying: "Timothy McVeigh said dead government workers are good government workers. Goodbye, Sambo."

Ellison, the country's first Muslim congressman, said at the time that he receives regular hate mail. Congressional documents show that Ellison has taken some special security precautions.

While Saturday's shooting may lead to some security changes, Harper said it would not change the way McCollum interacted with the public.

"The congresswoman is going to go and continue to do her job of serving constituents," said Harper. "We're going to continue to see constituents and meet with people at public events."

In a statement expressing sadness over the shooting, Ellison also indicated that he would not be intimidated: "We can never allow violence, threats and intimidation to prevail," he said. "Americans will never bow to the gun."